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The Mother in the Church

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The Mother in the Church.

By LUCY RIDER MEYER, Chicago.

In a phrase of striking beauty and suggestiveness, Paul calls the Church "the household of faith." We may well study the comparison. Like the family the Church has its adult members and its little children, its strong and its weak, its robust and its ailing ones. The pastor, set apart officially to minister in doctrine and discipline, stands for the father. The laity, with its numerous auxiliary organizations composed of men and women, may well correspond to the older brothers and sisters. But—where is the mother? The Roman Catholic Church has felt so deeply the need of the feminine element in its organization that for nearly a thousand years it has denied its pastors the right of literal fatherhood that they may ideally be both father and mother to the flock. The gift to the Roman Church of the Virgin Mary herself, deified increasingly in these later centuries, has been in farsighted response to the same ever-recurring demand. But Protestants understand how worse than useless are these unnatural make shifts. Our ideal, were we forced to give enough thought to the subject to formulate an ideal, is that the perfect pastor, unrestrained in the social and family relations which go to make up perfect manhood, unites in himself the qualities of an entire humanity—feminine as well as masculine. But there are two reasons why this ideal can never be realized. The first is found in the very constitution of a man, by which he is unadapted, mentally and spiritually, for much of the work of "the household of faith;" and the second appears in the artificial limitations placed upon every pastor—the social restrictions that bind him, and, above all, the unwritten law which, with rare exceptions, places only one man at the head of a parish, no matter if that parish numbers tens of thousands.* Nor can it be successfully maintained that woman's helpful but necessarily limited activity in unofficial lines supplies the needs of the mother in the Church, even though this activity is a matter of

*The school census of 1896 shows a population of ninety thousand people within a radius of eight blocks from Halsted Street Methodist Episcopal Church, in Chicago.

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grateful comment the world over. For, if so, then the converse would hold, that because of the assistance of our stewards, trustees, class leaders and Sunday-school superintendents, who are usually men, we do not need the pastor.

There are two chief sources from which we may hope to know God's will touching the fundamental needs of mankind—the Scriptures and that other great book, the human heart as it is revealed in the social conditions about us. What, first, has the Bible to tell us of the work of woman in the early Church? The record is fragmentary, but it is suggestive. The first hint of formal Church organization, aside from the apostolic college, was the appointment of the seven deacons. The occasion was the murmuring of the Grecian Jews "because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations." These "widows" are popularly supposed to have been pensioners on the Church, and we frankly concede that the weight of authority is in favor of this view. But no less a scholar than Dean J. S. Howson, the well-known co-author with Conybeare of the standard *Life of St. Paul*, contends earnestly that such an understanding is not in accord with the spirit of the Church at that time.† He maintains that we have here rather the first germs of that organization of almsgiving widows, or deaconesses, so well known in the later Church; and that these women received the bounty of the Church, not to expend it upon themselves, but to bestow it upon the poor about them; that even at this early time there began to flow through woman's hands those streams of beneficence which were so marked a characteristic of the early Church.‡ And, in proof of this, we notice Paul's direction concerning "widows" in 1 Tim. v. 9, 10, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, . . . well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." These widows are commonly credited with having all been alms-receivers, but the authorities are not few who believe that many among them were deaconesses.§ In incidental confirmation of this theory we have the fact that the deaconesses of the early

† Dean Howson says, in *Evidential Value of the Acts of the Apostles:* "For my part I am inclined to think that 'the widows' were . . . enrolled, not for the receiving of relief, but for the administration of relief. It is remarkable that the first organization of the deacons, the earliest named part of the establishment of a Christian ministry, arose out of questions of practical charity. If the suggestion I have ventured to make is a sound one, the very earliest ministry in the Church of Christ, under the apostles, was a ministry of women for the exercise of sympathetic help."

‡ See Uhlhorn's *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church.*

§ The word καταλεγέσθω (1 Tim. v. 9) means not loosely "taken into the number," as in the Authorized Version, but "enrolled," as in the Revised

Church were at first always chosen from among the "widows" and were always over threescore years of age. It is worth while to notice, also, in this connection, that it is now generally agreed that the γυναίκας of 1 Tim. iii, 11, does not mean "wives." Chrysostom says of this passage that it means, not women in general, but deaconesses. Jerome, looking back to the deacons just preceding, translates it "*mulieres similiter.*" And following many modern authorities also, there is good ground for believing that Paul had in mind here, not the women in general of the Church, but the women of the Church who corresponded to the deacons of the verses preceding.

But, dismissing these "widows"—and we speak of them not so much argumentatively as suggestively—the Phœbe of Rom. xvi, 1, has a strong claim to recognition as a deaconess. Ancient scholarship accorded her the office unhesitatingly, and modern scholarship has struggled with its conservatism until she has at last been named a "deaconess" outright in the margin of the Revised Version. And it cannot be denied that in the Church of the second,* third and fourth centuries deaconesses, or helping widows, were very numerous and very active. They occupied an official position,† and were the counterpart of the deacon.‡ They were even ordained,§ or at least set apart to their

Version. There may have been a more careful enrollment from the list of the widows. Notice the reading preferred by the American revisers for the verses following, wherein the younger widows were refused because they may reject their first pledge. Some widows doubtless were alms-receivers, but how unlikely that the women of this "number" who had houses and lands for the exercise of a wide hospitality and other good works, with children now grown who would surely, according to apostolic direction, support them—how unlikely that such women, a whole class of them, should become pensioners on the Church. How much more likely that they were women who, by these very characteristics and this very training, were now recognized as qualified to become the almoners to others of the bounty of the Church.

A curious variation of the Arabic Version is to the point here. That version says boldly, "If a widow be chosen a deacon."

* Pliny, in a letter to Trajan, about A. D. 109, asks about the "*duæ ancillæ*" that are called "*ministræ*." The class was evidently known as such, since Pliny gives it the technical explanatory designation.

† In the Oriental Churches the deaconess undoubtedly belonged to the clergy.—*Uhlhorn's Christian Charity in the Ancient Church.*

‡ This appears constantly in the literature of the early Church. Ἡ διάκονος stands side by side with ὁ διάκονος in the *Apostolic Constitutions* and in the writings of the Church fathers whenever both classes are mentioned. The same form of words are used for the ordaining or setting apart of deacons and deaconesses. The functions of the two differed, however. The work of the deaconess was much with her own sex, and was less public than that of the deacon.

One form of the word, διάκονος, was at first used for both genders. The feminine form, διακόνισσα, came into use later. The English Bishop Brown is authority for the statement that διάκονος is never applied in the secular sense to woman.

§ The *Apostolic Constitutions* say, "Touching the deaconesses, I, Bar-

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office by the imposition of hands and by prayer.‖ Chrysostom, the "golden-mouthed" bishop of Constantinople, was profoundly impressed with the value of the work of deaconesses,** and numbered among them trusted advisers and personal friends. The story of his friendship with Olympias, a woman of "exquisite beauty" and noble birth, who had given not only herself, but her vast fortune to the diaconate, has often been told.††

It is not to the purpose, however, to trace in detail the history of woman's diaconate in the early Church, its wide scope, and later decay. It is enough to show, as has been done, that probably in the time of the apostles and certainly in the years immediately following, when the Church, still directly under apostolic influence, was slowly crystallizing into organized form, the place of woman as an officer in the Church was clearly recognized and authorized. And that notwithstanding her exceedingly circumscribed social position.

Let us now turn from God's written will to those conditions of human society in whose significant undertone we hear his voice speaking to his Church and saying: "In these needs also find your call to service. Let the empty mouths and the half-clad bodies of the poor, let the starving souls of the rich whom you never reach with your preached Gospel, let the moans of the uncared-for sick and dying and the needs of friendless children be as the voice of the Son of man pleading with you for relief." In the light of such a call can we not see how pitiable is our inadequacy? The question resolves itself into simply this: Can the Church as at present organized—excluding the deaconess movement, which is hardly yet an appreciable force in our midst—meet all the demands of society that it ought to meet?

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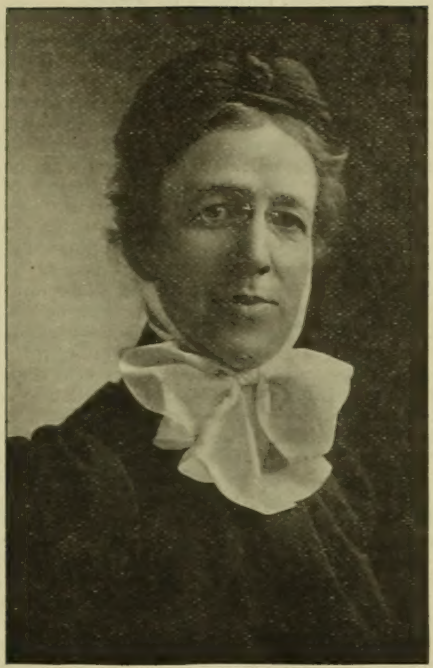
tholomew, do thus ordain: O bishop, thou shalt lay on her thy hands in the presence of the presbytery, of the deacons and deaconesses, and thou shalt say, 'O eternal God,'" etc. But her duties are limited. She must not "bless" (pronounce the benediction), and must not baptize; for "to ordain female priests would be pagan."

A canon of the Nicene Council (A. D. 326) ordained deaconesses in the Church. Western gatherings of the Church from A. D. 440 on, including the Synod of Orange and the Council of Orleans, forbid the ordaining of any more "widows who are called deaconesses."

‖This is not stated to broach in any way a disquieting claim to similar recognition in modern times, but simply as a curious fact of history. The laying on of hands seems not to have been as formal and technical an act in ancient times as it has since become. Doubtless the acts of ordination and benediction shaded into each other.

** Speaking of Phœbe (Rom. xvi, 1), Chrysostom says: "See how many ways he [Paul] takes to give her dignity. For he has both mentioned her before the rest and called her sister. It is no mean thing to be called a sister of Paul. Moreover, he has added to her rank by mentioning her being a deaconess. Paul places on each side this blessed woman her praises." —*Homilies on Romans.*

†† Seventeen of the two hundred and forty-two letters of Chrysostom still extant are addressed to Olympias.



LUCY RIDER MEYER.

Let it be distinctly understood that the efficiency of the Gospel message is not questioned here, but only the present sufficiency and adaptability of the means for conveying that message. And it is contended that there is an urgent need, not only of the administrative and teaching ministry of men, supplemented by such social and physical ministry as they may be able to give, but also of the characteristic ministry of women.

We may look, for instance, at the need among children. The eminent French philanthropist, M. Georges Bonjean, made the astounding assertion some years ago that according to careful calculation there were in France one hundred thousand children, between the ages of twelve and sixteen, who were outcast or youthful criminals* ("*abandonnes ou coupables*"). It makes the brain reel and the heart swell to bursting to think of what underlies this condition, of the vast mass of slum-born suffering babyhood that makes possible this great army of a hundred thousand outcast youth. The better moral and industrial conditions of America prevent our statistics from rising to such frightful heights, but every thoughtful student of the situation knows that there are hundreds and thousands of outcast or abandoned children in the United States. They are in our poor-houses, or absolutely unsheltered and unmothered on our city streets. And has the Church of God no responsibility concerning these little ones? Has it forgotten that childhood is God's special time of opportunity for inculcating religious truth? We mourn over the obduracy of the adult sinner and train all our strong batteries of argument and effort to beat down the hard walls of his habit and prejudice, while we neglect the low swinging portal of the heart of the child, ready to yield at the gentlest touch. But as the Church is now organized, with its unofficial women members occupied so largely with social duties or blessedly busy with family cares, can it do more than the most fragmentary work for orphan and needy children? According to our last *Year Book*, it is taking the efforts and contributions of almost three thousand of our Church members to care for one orphan child."†

But look in another direction, at the tens of thousands of not entirely abandoned but criminally neglected children. The evangel of the public school is doing much for the general intelligence of its pupils, but there are hundreds of thousands of children in the great cities of the United States not reached at all by the public school. For instance, a study of the school census of

* Quoted in leaflet by the late Pastor Hocart, calling attention to the work of his daughter's "*Maison des Enfants*," 31 Rue de Corneille, Levalois-Perret, *pres* Paris.

† There are 1,020 children listed in the *Year Book* as the average attendance in our children's homes and orphanages—pp. 105-111. But our total lay membership in the United States is 2,716,652. See page 33 of *Year Book*.

the city of Chicago reveals some startling facts. In the twenty-four central wards of that city there were, by the census of 1898, 242,780 children of school age—that is, between six and fourteen. According to the report of the Board of Education there were at that time only 114,665 sittings in the public school buildings of these twenty-four wards; less than half that of the number of school children. Allowing 50,000 for children who may have been attending private and parochial schools, and for those enjoying the partial relief of half-day sessions—and this estimate is a liberal one—it still remains true that there were more than 75,000 children in the heart of the second greatest city of our land who were not in any school whatever.‡

But what of the moral and spiritual training of even that part of the children who are in the public school? The government of Mexico, though it represents a reaction against the most common form of religion in that country, has put into its public schools an excellent text-book on ethics; but there is no required ethical teaching in the United States. Multitudes of children in our public schools are never found in any place of religious teaching. They never hear a prayer, and are in such ignorance of the bare historical facts of Christianity that it is easy to cite case after case where even the names of God have been known only as convenient bywords—blasphemy itself condoned by ignorance.

Moreover, what as to the industrial and social future of these children? Occasionally an exceptionally advanced public school touches the border of "manual training"—teaches a boy to drive a nail and a girl to sew a seam—but not one gives them a trade. Our Trades Unions make the old-fashioned apprenticeship next to impossible. Our few manual training schools are far too expensive for the many, not to speak of the further complicating fact that the almost exclusive division of labor into "piece work" is greatly lessening the possibility that even the boy who has a trade will be able to earn a living by it. How are these children of the slums going to learn how to earn a respectable livelihood when the time comes that they must shift for themselves? Has the Church of God no responsibility in this matter? Has it no golden opportunity? What if it has not yet fully thought through the problem, shall it withhold a present, practical help, even if partial, because it cannot make a theory of perfect eventual relief? Shall it hesitate as to its own plain duty while speculating as to what the State ought to do? What if teaching the industries and feeding the hungry is not the highest function of the Church? Jesus Christ fed the hungry in emergencies. The apostolic church fed the hungry in emer-

‡ For this statistical study the author is indebted to Dr. W. E. McLennan, pastor of Trinity Church, Chicago.

gencies. Perhaps the profoundest impression upon society made by the early Church was because of its feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.§ And is there not an emergency now? Let it be conceded that it is the State that should be charged with the duty of giving her children such a start in life that with honest labor they may gain at least a respectable living; the fact is the State is not doing it. Moreover, till there shall be wrought a vast change of public sentiment on this subject, the State cannot do it. It has not the buildings, it has not the money to pay teachers. But the Church has hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of magnificent buildings, used now but six or eight hours a week. It has a great body of women, unemployed, or inadequately employed, who, once their eyes were opened to the need of such work, would volunteer to do it. Ought it not to throw open its buildings and establish and operate a thousand industrial schools, where cooking, and dressmaking, and housekeeping shall be so thoroughly taught to the girl of ten or twelve that she shall not at fourteen or fifteen be driven into the "ways that take hold on hell" by the bay of the gray wolf of starvation at her heels? And schools where boys may learn to use their hands in such a way that in the swift-coming years they may not be forced into the life of a criminal for lack of food to eat?* And especially since the prosecution of this work opens up the most admirable opportunities for the molding of character and furthering of spiritual development.

But look at still another great class of needs: those, physical and spiritual, when the body is laid low by sickness. Only within the last few years, and largely because of the sentiment which our few deaconesses have created, has the modern Church so much as recognized that it had the slightest responsibility in this matter. The early Church, with its great "hospices," was not so blind. Our Lord's command was not only "Preach the Gospel," but "Heal the sick."† What a painfully imperfect understanding is that which makes it the duty of all ages to preach the Gospel, yet practically declares the duty of healing

§ Julian the apostate, speaking of the "Galileans," tells us that by their charity to the poor they "begot the greatest admiration for their religion in the minds of men." He even urged systematic efforts among heathen for the relief of poverty, declaring, "It is disgraceful, when there is not a beggar found among the Jews, and when the godless Galileans support our poor as their own, that our people should be without our help."—*Sozomen Ec. Hist.*, v, 16.

* Said a New York Judge of the Supreme Court a few years ago, "There is a large class—I was about to say a majority—of the population of New York and Brooklyn who just live, and to whom the rearing of two or more children means inevitably a boy for the penitentiary and a girl for the brothel."—*Henry George's Social Problems*, p. 98. Quoted by Josiah Strong in *Our Country*.

† Matt. x, 7, 8; Luke ix, 2; x, 9.

the sick to have ceased with the miraculous gifts of the apostolic age. Illness, like childhood, is a God-given opportunity for religious influence. When flesh and heart grow weak and hands are stretched out for help in mortal agony, when dear ones are passing into the vast unknown and solemn thoughts of the life hereafter are forced upon the mind, or when long days of convalescence come and there is "nothing to do but think," then words concerning Jesus, and sin, and heaven are seed falling into good ground. Do we not owe it to the world that wherever trembling hands are stretched out, groping in the dark, some agent of the Church be there, some representative of Jesus Christ, with comfort and help? If we were wise to see and seize these opportunities, if we had trained, tactful servants of the Church ready to take advantage of them, we might in the first decade of the century just dawning win half the world for Christ. Yet the Church can never seriously undertake to care for the sick without the help of the official women. None other will have at her command uninterrupted time for such service, and none other will have the requisite skill, for this helper must be technically trained.

With the thought of the modern world's great need in mind we may well turn again for a moment to the history of woman's diaconate. It never lapsed entirely; the organized, authorized work of women was too vital to the well-being of the Church to permit the loss of the idea. Underneath the perverted forms of the Roman Catholic Church we find it still struggling for existence. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it broke out in a most interesting and curious movement—little companies of pious women, the Beguines, lightly bound by rules, devoting themselves to works of mercy, the care of children and the sick. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the corruption and decay of these Beguines, but the rise of the "Sisters of Common Life," whose work was also largely objective. But in the seventeenth century, in the founding by Vincent de Paul of the order of the "Sisters of Charity," the Roman Church most nearly approached the diaconate of the early times. Vincent de Paul was its Fliedner. To him that Church is very largely indebted for practical methods of organizing women, not for the cloister but for objective benevolent work.

The women in various branches of this order in the early days were not nuns; they were not bound by lifelong vows. They were free to come and go as needed. The beautiful directions of Vincent de Paul are still extant, "Your convent must be the home of the sick; your cell the chamber of suffering; your chapel the parish church; your cloister the streets of the city or the wards of the hospital; your rule the general vow of obedience; your grille the fear of God; your veil, to shut out the

world, holy modesty." But the rules of this and similar orders hardly waited their founder's death to be modified in harmony with the monastic spirit, when very much less of liberty was allowed. Vows were made burdensome, and obligations to formal devotions at very frequent intervals interfered greatly with practical work. This is true also of the multitudinous Roman orders of women at the present time. While woman's activities in the Roman Church have undoubtedly deeply influenced Protestantism we do not find there at any time the true diaconate of woman.

It is exceedingly interesting to observe, in certain reformatory movements of the Church before the Reformation proper, attempts to reinstate the Early Church diaconate of women. The Waldenses in France, the Moravians in Bohemia, and the Mennonites in the Netherlands endeavored to reinstate isolated deaconesses in their congregations. There was, however, no endeavor to connect with these efforts that which history would seem to show to be essential to permanency and success—the sisterhood life, and the attempts are principally interesting as showing the persistence of the idea. Luther took no energetic steps toward the retention of sisterhoods in the Reformed Church,* but there is no lack of testimony from him as to his recognition of the value of woman's religious work, and even of that work carried on through sisterhoods, free, of course, from the compulsions and corruptions only too common in Romanism.† There was, however, so much well-founded dread in Protestantism of the convent system as illustrated in the Roman Church, that all that was done for centuries to reinstate the diaconate of women was some feeble attempt here and there to appoint a congregational deaconess, notably in the congregations of the Puritans and in the Reformed Church of Germany. It remained for the good Lutheran pastor, Theodore Fliedner, to bring about in Germany, in the first half of the nineteenth century the true

* But Luther wrote, in 1532, to the senate of the city of Herford, which was planning to abolish its convents: "Inasmuch as these . . . sisters lead an honest life, and have an honorable, well-conducted community, moreover as they faithfully honor and obey the pure doctrine, it is my friendly petition that . . . you will allow them to wear their clerical habit and practice all praiseworthy customs. For such convents please me beyond measure."

† The election of the seven (Acts vi.) and the remembrance of the charitable work of the Church could not fail to direct Luther's attention to the diaconate. He says, "It were well, it we had the right kind of people to begin it, that the city be divided into four or five parts, and each part be assigned a pastor and several deacons, who would supply that district with preaching and almsgiving, visiting the sick, etc." Here the entire province of the diaconate, as a personal office for rendering bodily and spiritual aid, is placed beside that of the ministry. Had such an arrangement been practicable, Christian women would have undoubtedly found their place in it. —*Emil Wacker, in The Deaconess Calling.*

renaissance of the office of deaconess. He saw, as did no other of his times, the possibilities of the organized work of Christian women. The social status of women in Germany sixty years ago, the conservatism of our Teutonic cousins, and lower moral plane of the Lutheran Church in Germany—which for instance, even to this date permits the Kaiserswerth work to be aided by great lotteries carried on under the "mother house" roof—made it inevitable that the work of the Fliedner deaconesses, judged by American standards, should be limited. Even at the present time, though their number has increased amazingly and their influence in philanthropy has been immense, yet we find Lutheran deaconesses mostly as nurses and as caretakers in orphanages and reformatories. But it is to be gratefully noted not only that Fliedner brought into the modern world a workable plan for a Protestant sisterhood, but that our present splendid system of nurses' training schools, the civilized world over, originated directly in his effort to train Christian women to care for the sick. For Florence Nightingale and Agnes Jones drew not only their skill, but to a large extent their inspiration, from Kaiserswerth.

But the deaconess movement in American Methodism is strikingly spontaneous. It is not a growth from the German root. Its workers bear the same name as those in Germany, and do in some respects a similar work, but it originated independently and on a far broader and more evangelistic basis. About the time Fliedner was founding his deaconess "mother house" in Germany the women in England and America were organizing their missionary "Female Prayer Meetings," and one-third of a century later the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in the Methodist Episcopal Church was struck out of the hearts of women white-hot with love and pity for the woes of their heathen sisters. A decade later the undenominational Woman's Christian Temperance Union was organized, affecting all classes, but Methodism very deeply. Then came the Woman's Home Missionary Society in Methodism, born out of a great desire to help the ignorant and godless of our own land. Women were not only going forward to meet their share of the responsibilities of a lost world, but they were rapidly learning wisdom. They were perceiving the tremendous advantages of organization. All these movements were prophetic of the organic innovation coming to the Church in the aptly-named Deaconess Movement.

There was established in Chicago, in 1885, a date which Dr. Abel Stevens says "will hereafter be commemorated as an historical epoch in American Methodism," ‡ the first center in the Methodist Episcopal Church to which women believing them-

‡ *Central Christian Advocate*, 1893.

selves called of God for special religious work could gather and in which they could receive preparation for that work. It soon became also a meeting place for missionaries, and an institution in which women not intending to enter any mission field might nevertheless study the Bible and social problems. The spontaneity of the movement is strikingly illustrated by the fact that this institution, the Chicago Training School for City, Home and Foreign Missions, was established not in connection with any society,§ but by the personal efforts of a few individuals. It was, however, promptly recognized by the Annual Conference within whose territory it was established. Two years later the deaconess work proper of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America had its first informal beginnings in the Chicago Training School. With the preparation and oncoming of companies of women, and the increasingly loud call from the great city in the midst of which the school was located, the result was inevitable. Here was the need, here was the means to meet the need; they could not fail to come together. It was as if God had opened a door and thrust one through it. Not till months afterward did the founders of the work in America learn that the effort in the United States was closely akin to the work of the Lutheran deaconesses across the water, and that there was in existence in that country a little nucleus of Methodist deaconesses. For those German Methodist deaconesses, while intensely evangelical, were very naturally patterning closely after the Lutheran sisters in organization and work, and they had not then become an appreciable force in Methodism.

The first deaconess institution in American Methodism* was the Chicago Deaconess Home, established in the building of the Chicago Training School in June, 1887. It received the recognition of the Rock River Annual Conference, in which Chicago is located, a few months later. It attracted much attention. After nearly a year of successful operation a memorial concerning it went up to the General Conference of 1888. It fell into the hands of Dr.—now Bishop—Thoburn, who for years had been planning for some kind of a sisterhood to reinforce mission work among women in India, and now he came bringing also a memorial, from the Bengal Conference, looking to this object.

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§ The Woman's Foreign and the Woman's Home Missionary Societies were both informally represented in the first committees of the Training School, ladies being asked to serve who were known to be active in these societies. The school had not been in existence a month before both societies formally recommended it. It has, moreover, from time to time received small donations from both societies. But it is, and always has been, organically independent of any organization but the Church itself.

* The limits of this article do not permit mention of the much smaller work of the Protestant Episcopal and the Lutheran deaconesses in America.

To the Missionary Committee, of which Dr. Thoburn was chairman, this memorial and the one from Chicago were referred, and it was largely by the doctor's earnest advocacy that favorable legislation was secured. In the General Conference of 1900 the paragraphs "On Deaconesses" were recast, and adopted as they now appear in the present Discipline. No formal definition of a deaconess is given, but all the characteristics which had been stamped upon the deaconess in the spontaneous development of the movement are therein recognized. She is a trained free volunteer, usually living in an institution. She is unsalaried, but "entitled to support." She is licensed and "consecrated" by the authorities of the Church. She is bound by no vows. Her preparatory course of study is by no means nominal. It is nearly always taken in a training school. When consecrated she becomes a Church officer. The bishop, in the beautiful Consecration Service, takes her by the hand and says, "I admit thee to the office." Whether in or out of institutions she is directly under the care of the Board of Bishops, which has become a "General Deaconess Board" for "general supervision over all deaconess work throughout the Church." The Annual Conference "Deaconess Boards," however, have certain responsibilities, chief among which is the granting of the license of the deaconess. The approval of the Conference itself must be given every year for the continuance of the deaconess in office, reminding one of the "passing of character" of the deacons. Transfers to and from Annual Conferences must be made with the approval of the District Bishops. Deaconesses in institutions are under the immediate direction of the superintendent of the institution

Once given ecclesiastical recognition the deaconess movement immediately entered upon a period of development so rapid that it has been difficult to supply it with the necessary workers. In December, 1888, the second home was established, the great Gamble Home—and, later, Hospital—in Cincinnati. The year 1889 was marked by the opening of deaconess homes in New York, Boston and Minneapolis. Wesley Hospital was organized in Chicago, the first in America under deaconess auspices. It was in this year also that the Woman's Home Missionary Society, at its annual meeting in November, resolved to combine with its growing activities, methods of deaconess work.†

† This society held from the first the ideal of training for its employes. But the four most characteristic features of a deaconess—namely, that she is (1) unsalaried, (2) costumed, (3) adopts usually the community life, and especially (4) that she is by her license and consecration recognized as an officer in the Church—had their providential rise in American Methodism in the work started in Chicago, June, 1887, and were now for the first time adopted by the Woman's Home Missionary Society for its workers.

The first home under the auspices of this society was opened in Detroit in January, 1890.

At the present time there are about eighty centers ‡ of deaconess work in the United States, including three Orphanages and Children's Homes, three Old People's Homes, and seventeen Hospitals.§ There are, including probationers, about eight hundred women devoting themselves to this work, Including the three hundred Methodist deaconesses of Germany and the sixty in foreign mission fields, for which this kind of work is admirably adapted, there are eleven hundred and sixty deaconesses and probationers in the Methodist Episcopal Church.‖ The German Methodists in America have taken up the work with enthusiasm, giving this branch of the work a strong impulse toward the "mother-house" idea, as is the case with all the work in Germany.

The most characteristic feature of deaconess work in American Methodism is its spontaneity. Though greatly aided and strengthened by its recognition by the General Conference it did not originate with that body. The women themselves had inaugurated the work, had mastered the initial difficulties, and had carried on the work almost a year before General Conference recognition. That recognition was, indeed, almost wholly because of the work. The real origin of the work in America was, [illegible]her-instinct of woman herself, and in that wider con- [illegible] woman's "family duties" that compels her to include [illegible]ing care the great needy world-family as well as the [illegible]ttle domestic circle. And the development of the work is satisfactory and expansive just in proportion as in its details and responsibilities it is laid directly on the hearts and hands of the deaconesses themselves.*

As to the character of the work being done by deaconesses,

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‡ Reckoning as "centers" places where not less than two deaconesses are at work. About thirty "stations," places at which a single deaconess is at work, are also scattered throughout the country.

§ Adding the three deaconess hospitals in Germany, at Frankfort-on-Main, Berlin and Hamburg, we have a total of twenty deaconess hospitals in the Methodist Episcopal Church. These hospitals cared for more than ten thousand resident patients last year, with much dispensary and outside work.

‖ See *Methodist Year Book*, 1901, p. 119.

* In America, in the English-speaking work, nearly all the homes and hospitals have deaconess superintendents, unsalaried, of course, as is the case with all deaconesses. Upon the shoulders of a deaconess rest all the detail work and the full financial responsibility of an orphanage containing more than ninety children. Deaconesses are successfully managing a large hospital in Omaha, which last year cared for eight hundred and ninety-eight patients, and a e collecting money for a great building. So in scores of similar instances.

the two original ideas in America were the religious visitation of the neglected in great cities and nursing the sick poor in their own homes. But in the rapid development of the movement other work has sought these willing hands. As may be seen by reference to our *Year Book*, orphanages, hospitals, settlements, homes for the aged, even literary schools—all sorts of helpful institutions—have been established by deaconesses or have been put into their hands by a confident Church or by philanthropic individuals. Literary enterprises have been undertaken.† About two million dollars' worth of property and endowment is now being used in deaconess work. Land, private houses, school and hospital buildings are seeking deaconess ownership quite as fast as deaconesses can be prepared to take wise possession. Among our eleven hundred and sixty deaconesses there are nurses, caretakers of children and the aged, matrons, singers, kindergartners, stenographers, financial agents, physicians, teachers in literary schools, editors, evangelists, and superintendents of homes and hospitals. Many women have left lucrative positions to devote themselves to this work. Some are using their own private funds to support themselves in it. There is nothing that a Christian woman can do, and that needs to be undertaken in the church, which may not be done by the deaconess. She is free to do anything; she is trained to undertake with courage and devotion whatever may be put into her hands. She has no vow of service, but a loving will that is stronger than vows pledges her to move against the mountain of human sorrow and need, with the assurance that it will in God's good time be removed.

By far the most urgent need of the Deaconess Movement at present is more workers. In the Roman Church of America alone—including Canada—there are to-day more than sixty thousand Sisters of Mercy,* a very large majority of whom are actively prosecuting the most practical forms of benevolent work. They educate and care for the youth, of whom they have considerably more than half a million in hand. They nurse the sick and aid in all sorts of reformatory work. They have charge of six hundred and ninety-five houses of mercy—hospitals, homes for the aged, orphanages, industrial schools—and are founding new ones almost every day. Their hospitals alone number one hundred and sixty-seven. Honor to them. But does the devotion of the women of that Church, where entering a religious

† A book on Deaconess Work has been written by a deaconess. A monthly periodical with a circulation of about twenty-thousand is sent out by deaconesses.

* *Catholic Directory* for 1900. Official. Published by M. H. Wiltzius & Co., Milwaukee, Wis.

order means so often a living entombment, exceed that of the women of our Church in which to enter this office means a life of free and joyous service for Christ? Who does not know that the real work, the telling work, of the Roman Catholic Church in America has been done very largely by its women? It is their devoted service in hospital and yellow fever camp that has not only gained friends and converts to the Church by scores and thousands, but has created an enormous public sentiment in its favor and brought money by the millions of dollars into its treasuries. It is their quiet but unceasing work with the young that gains adherents by the hundreds of thousands. But the women of Methodism, breathed upon by a wind from heaven, are "rising up," "at ease" no longer, and are coming forward to do the same work—nay, a better, purer, more spiritual work for our beloved Church. Nearly eleven hundred volunteers in fourteen years—that is their record. And the number through two quadrenniums has increased at the annual rate of twenty-six per cent. Two hundred and fifty thousand religious calls made last year! Twenty thousand religious meetings held with mothers and children! A score of hospitals established and in hand, wherein were cared for by Methodist deaconesses last year more than ten thousand patients, not to speak of the half as many more poor sick ones given loving Christian ministration in their own homes. Do we understand the significance of this already great work? Who can realize what it will mean to Protestantism when the Mother shall have been fully established again in her place in the Household of Faith?

From the "Methodist Review," New York, September–October, 1901.

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